

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00  
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 NSCE-00 SSO-00  
ICAE-00 INRE-00 NEAE-00 MCE-00 /098 W  
-----086075 122003Z /64

O R 121742Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3089  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA  
USMISSION SINAI  
USMISSION USUN NY  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6200

E.O. 11652 GDS  
TAGS: MILI, PGOV, US, IS  
SUBJECT: SENATE COMMITTEE SPLIT ON ARMS PACKAGE-ISRAEL REACTION

1. SUMMARY: ISRAELI REACTION TO THE PACKAGE DEAL CONTINUES TO BE HIGHLY AMBIVALENT. THE PREDOMINANT OPINION SEEMS TO BE THAT THE GUARANTEES BY THE SAUDIS WOULD BE HIGHLY UNRELIABLE AND THAT THE ADDITIONAL PLANES PROMISED WOULD NOT NECESSARILY COMPENSATE ISRAELIS FOR THE DISADVANTAGES OF THE LINKED PACKAGE DEAL. HOWEVER, THE PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENTAL DEBATE WHETHER OR NOT TO ACCEPT THE PACKAGE DEAL, SHOULD IT BE SUSTAINED BY CONGRESS, CONTINUES AND ITS OUTCOME REMAINS UNCLEAR. END SUMMARY.  
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2. BEGIN UNCLAS- BOTH HAARETZ AND THE JERUSALEM POST CARRY A STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR DINITZ THAT "ISRAEL CONTINUES TO OPPOSE LINKAGE OF COMMITMENTS MADE TO ISRAEL WITH ARMS SALES TO ANY OTHER COUNTRY. THE ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT AND ASSURANCES OFFERED WOULD NOT MEET ISRAEL'S DEFENSE REQUIREMENTS. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WE CONTINUE TO OPPOSE THE SUPPLY OF AIRCRAFT AS SUBMITTED

IN THE PROPOSED PACKAGE." THESE PAPERS SEE THIS DECLARATION AS A SIGNAL FROM ISRAEL THAT THE GOI REMAINS DISSATISFIED WITH LAST MINUTE CONCESSIONS OFFERED, BUT THAT JERUSALEM IS NOT YET WILLING TO GO SO FAR AS SAYING ALL OR NOTHING.

3. WOLF BLITZER, REPORTING IN THE POST FROM WASHINGTON, SEES THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS VOTE AS NEITHER A VICTORY NOR A DEFEAT FOR ISRAEL. HE THINKS THE MOST LIKELY OPTION OPEN FOR THE PRESENT WILL BE SOME FORM OF COMPROMISE, WITH OPPONENTS OF THE PACKAGE RECEIVING SOME WRITTEN ASSURANCES ON SAUDI F-15S, ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT FOR ISRAEL, AND ACCELERATED DELIVERY SCHEDULE OF PLANES FOR ISRAEL.

4. DAVAR (LABOR-HISTADRUT), IN A FRONT PAGE STORY, TOOK THE VIEW THAT THE VOTE REPRESENTED A DEFACTO DEFEAT FOR OPPONENTS OF THE PACKAGE SALE. POINTING OUT THAT FOR ISRAEL THE POWER BALANCE IS MORE FAVORABLE IN THE SENATE THAN IN THE HOUSE COMMITTEE, THE PAPER SAID THAT CHANCES OF BLOCKING THE PACKAGE DEAL ARE MEAGER. THE DAVAR ARTICLE DECLARED THAT ISRAEL IS NOW FACED WITH A NEW REALITY-- I.E., IN THE FUTURE ISRAEL'S ARMS SUPPLY DEALS FROM THE US WILL BE INCREASINGLY TIED TO THOSE TO FRIENDLY ARAB COUNTRIES. THUS THE GOI SHOULD BLOCK THE ENTIRE PACKAGE INCLUDING THE COMPROMISE, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF LOSING THE PLANES ALTOGETHER.  
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5. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. THE ISRAELI DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT CONTINUES TO FEEL DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION APPROACH, BUT APPEARS TO BE UNWILLING TO FOREGO THE PLANES. MORDECHAI ZIPPORI, HARDLINE DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER, IN CONVERSATION ON MAY 11 WITH EMBASSY OFFICER, WAS CONTEMPTUOUS OF SAUDI PROMISES AND CRITICIZED THE US FOR NAIVETE. A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT APPROACH WAS TAKEN BY THE CHIEF OF THE OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS DIVISION OF THE ISRAEL AIR FORCE WHO FELT THAT THE US WAS NOT REALLY DOING ISRAEL A FAVOR BY OFFERING EXTRA F-15 PLANES SINCE THE BENEFIT IS OUTWEIGHED BY THE EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH PURCHASE AND OPERATIONAL EXPENSE OF THE F-15. THIS ARGUMENT COULD OBVIOUSLY BE USED EITHER AGAINST THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF A COMPROMISE PACKAGE OR TO ENCOURAGE THE SUPPLEMENTARY 1.7 BILLION DOLLARS IN AID MENTIONED BY THE HOUSE COMMITTEE TO UNDERSECRETARY CHRISTOPHER AS MEANS TO ASSIST ISRAEL IN THE PURCHASE OF THE PLANES. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, WE HAVE RECEIVED THE IMPRESSION THAT THE IDF WOULD PREFER THE PLANES AND FIGURE A METHOD OF HANDLING THE SAUDIS IF THE NEED AROSE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6200

6. WE ENCOUNTERED SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VIEWS FROM CIVILIAN  
QUARTER. HIRSCH GOODMAN, MILITARY CORRESPONDENT FOR THE  
POST, SAID HE FEELS A WIDESPREAD CONSENSUS IS DEVELOPING  
ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM THAT THE PACKAGE DEAL IN  
EFFECT MAKES SAUDI ARABIA A CONFRONTATION STATE AND JEOPAR-  
DIZES ISRAEL'S SECURITY. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY  
COMPROMISE OR CONCESSION COULDS OFFSET THIS BASIC FACT AND  
CLAIMS THAT THE IDEA EXPRESSED BY FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF  
GUR IN HIS STATEMENT A FEW WEEKS AGO THAT ISRAEL SHOULD  
REFUSE THE PACKAGE AND HOLD OUT FOR A THREE YEAR SUSPENSION  
OF AIRCRAFT DELIVERIES WAS NOT A TACTICAL BLUFF BUT A HEART-  
FELT CONVICTION ON HIS PART.

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7. MK EHUD OLMERT (LIKUD-LA'AM) IN AN ATTEMPT TO DOWNPLAY

THE SENATE VOTE, FELT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION SUFFERED A DEFEAT SINCE IT HAD WORKED SO HARD ON THE PROPOSAL AND HAD MADE IT A MATTER OF PRESTIGE. HE BELIEVED THAT, FOR ITS PART, ISRAEL HAD NOT EXERTED SUFFICIENT EFFORT IN SELLING ITS CASE. OLMERT SAW THE NUMBER OF PLANES AS IRRELEVANT, AND HINTED THAT ISRAELI REJECTION OF THE WHOLE PACKAGE, INCLUDING IF NECESSARY THE PLANES FOR ISRAEL, WAS "UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION" AND THAT HE, HIMSELF, IS VEERING TOWARD REJECTION.

8. ZEEV SCHIFF OF HAARETZ TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT THERE IS GENERAL CONCERN THAT HENCEFORTH THE US WOULD SEEK TO FOLLOW SALES TO ISRAEL WITH SIMILAR SALES TO ARAB COUNTRIES. SCHIFF ADDED THAT "ESPECIALLY WITH A MAN LIKE EITAN AS CHIEF OF STAFF," THIS COULD LEAD TO A GRADUAL DECREASE OF US-ISRAELI MILITARY COOPERATION. HOWEVER, HE THOUGHT THAT ON BALANCE THE GOI WOULD ACCEPT THE PACKAGE DEAL IF IT PASSES CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL. MILITARY ATTACHES NOT SCHIFF'S COMMENTS WITH INTEREST, BUT THEY HAVE NO EVIDENCE EITAN IS MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION. THEY ALSO AGREE WITH THE JUDGMENT THAT ISRAEL WOULD PROBABLY BUY THE PACKAGE DEAL IF OFFERED.

9. COMMENT: WE ARE HEARING FREQUENTLY A VIEW THAT EARLIER SURFACED DURING THE SETTLEMENTS DISPUTE--THAT THE ADMINISTRATION IS BELIEVED TO BE USING THIS ISSUE TO BREAK THE POWER OF THE JEWISH LOBBY. OUR ENERGETIC EFFORTS HERE AND IN WASHINGTON TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF MEETING SAUDI ARABIA'S LEGITIMATE DEFENSE NEEDS PRODUCE LITTLE EFFECT. ISRAELIS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN THE PROCEDURAL INTRICACIES INVOLVED IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE WHICH IS VIEWED TO BE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THE COUNTRY, NOR

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IN OUR REASONED ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE FOR ISRAEL OF THE US-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP. THEY ARE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE END RESULT THAN WITH DAILY SKIRMISHES.  
LEWIS

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## Message Attributes

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**To:** STATE  
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